Protein biscuits: what high protein means on a label, how protein crackers are made, and how much protein ordinary biscuits have

From the crackers.biz wiki

Under UK labelling law, a food can claim to be high in protein only if at least 20% of its energy comes from protein, and a source of protein if at least 12% does. Working from Open Food Facts records, Dr Karg's pumpkin seed protein thins get about 29% of their energy from protein and Kallø protein lentil cakes about 28%, while a McVitie's digestive gets about 6%.

More protein, same crunch

Protein has become one of the most searched words on the snack aisle, and biscuits have followed: protein cookies, protein bars and high protein crackers now sit beside the digestives. But what makes a biscuit a protein biscuit, and how does it compare with the biscuits already in your tin? Here is what the law says a protein claim means, how protein crackers are made, how much protein ordinary biscuits contain, and the protein biscuits we stock.

What a protein claim means

Protein claims on food in the UK are controlled by law. The annex to Regulation 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims, published on legislation.gov.uk, says a food may claim to be a source of protein only where at least 12% of its energy value is provided by protein, and may claim to be high in protein only where at least 20% of its energy comes from protein. The test is the share of energy, not the grams alone, which stops a rich, high calorie biscuit calling itself high protein just because it contains a few grams.

You can work out the share yourself. Annex XIV of Regulation 1169/2011, the food information rules, sets the conversion factor for labels: protein provides 4 kcal per gram, the same as carbohydrate, while fat provides 9. Multiply the protein per 100g by four, divide by the kcal per 100g, and you have the share of energy from protein.

How much protein is in ordinary biscuits

Most biscuits are made mainly from flour, sugar and fat, so protein is a small part of their energy. Working from the Open Food Facts records for biscuits we stock, with protein at 4 kcal per gram, the share of energy

from protein is roughly:

- **Dr Karg's pumpkin seed protein thins:** 33g per 100g, about 29% of energy
- **Kallø protein lentil cakes:** 26g per 100g, about 28%
- **Nairn's gluten free mini cheese bakes:** 13.4g per 100g, about 12%
- **Nairn's super seeded organic oatcakes:** 12g per 100g, about 10%

Only the two made as protein products clear the 20% line for a high protein claim. Savoury oat and cheese biscuits come next, because oats, seeds and cheese bring more protein and less sugar than a sweet biscuit.

Protein per biscuit

Per biscuit, the difference is clearer still. Working from the same records, a 19g slice of Dr Karg's protein thins has about 6.3g of protein. If you want protein from a cracker, choose one made for it, or add a protein rich topping such as cheese, smoked fish or houmous.

How protein crackers are made

Protein crackers get their protein from their ingredients. Open Food Facts lists Dr Karg's protein thins, a German crispbread, as wholemeal wheat flour at 43%, wheat gluten, chopped pumpkin seeds at 19%, sunflower oil, sesame at 5%, linseed at 4%, yeast, sea salt and barley malt extract. Wheat gluten is the protein part of wheat, and the seeds add more. Kallø's lentil cakes take another route: Open Food Facts lists them as 85% lentil flour, with corn flour and buckwheat, and records them as vegan and gluten free. Sweet protein cookies may add protein powders instead, so read the ingredients to see where the protein comes from.

Protein does not mean low calorie

A protein biscuit is not automatically a light one. Open Food Facts records Dr Karg's protein thins at 461 kcal per 100g, about 88 kcal for a 19g slice, which is similar to many ordinary crackers per 100g, and Kallø's lentil cakes at 373 kcal per 100g. For calories across the biscuit aisle, see biscuit calories.

Allergies

Protein ingredients are often allergens. Dr Karg's protein thins contain wheat and wheat gluten, sesame and barley, and many protein cookies contain milk, soya or nuts. Always check the allergy advice on the pack.

Protein biscuits and fibre

Seeded protein crackers are often high in fibre too: Dr Karg's are recorded at 7.8g of fibre per 100g, above the 6g per 100g the same regulation sets for a high fibre claim. For more on fibre, see high fibre biscuits, and for other savoury bases, crispbread, oatcakes and rice cakes.

Baking higher protein biscuits at home

You can raise the protein in a homemade biscuit by changing a few ingredients. Replace some of the flour with ground almonds or oats, add seeds such as pumpkin, sunflower or linseed, or use a little milk powder in

the dough. The result will still be a biscuit, with butter and sugar, so do not expect a high protein product, but a seeded oat biscuit will have more protein and fibre than a plain butter biscuit. Remember that nuts, seeds and milk are allergens, and label homemade biscuits if you give them away.

Topping ideas

Protein crackers make a quick, filling snack with a topping: cottage cheese and tomato, hummus, a slice of cheese, peanut butter and banana, or smoked salmon and cream cheese all add more protein to the plate.

Quick facts

High protein claim	At least 20% of energy from protein
Source of protein claim	At least 12% of energy from protein
Energy from protein	4 kcal per gram
Dr Karg's protein thins	33g protein per 100g
Kallø lentil cakes	26g protein per 100g
McVitie's digestive	6.8g protein per 100g

Questions people ask

What are protein biscuits?

Biscuits, cookies or crackers made with extra protein, from ingredients such as wheat gluten, seeds, pulses or milk proteins, so that a bigger share of their energy comes from protein.

What does high protein mean on a biscuit?

Under Regulation 1924/2006, a food can be called high in protein only if at least 20% of its energy comes from protein, and a source of protein if at least 12% does.

How much protein is in an ordinary biscuit?

Not much. Open Food Facts records McVitie's digestives at 6.8g of protein per 100g, about 6% of their energy, and Rich Tea at 7.2g.

Which protein biscuits do you sell?

Dr Karg's pumpkin seed protein thins, a crispbread with 33g of protein per 100g, and Kallø protein lentil cakes with 26g.

How are protein crackers made?

By using protein rich ingredients: Dr Karg's lists wholemeal wheat flour, wheat gluten, pumpkin seeds, sesame and linseed, and Kallø's lentil cakes are 85% lentil flour.

How many calories are in protein biscuits?

Protein does not mean low calorie. Dr Karg's protein thins are recorded at 461 kcal per 100g, about 88 kcal per 19g slice, and Kallø lentil cakes at 373 kcal per 100g.

Sources

1. Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims, Annex, legislation.gov.uk
2. Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on food information, Annex XIV, legislation.gov.uk
3. Dr Karg's Protein Knäcke Kürbiskern (4033634028689), Open Food Facts
4. Kallø Lentil Cakes (5013665114017), Open Food Facts
5. McVitie's Digestives (5000168017853), Open Food Facts

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